

MOHÁCS 1526–2026
RECONSTRUCTION AND REMEMBRANCE

ISABELLA JAGIELLON,
QUEEN OF HUNGARY
(1539–1559)

Edited by
ÁGNES MÁTÉ AND TERÉZ OBORNI

STUDIES



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Gábor Petneházi* and Péter Kasza**

“*SIC FATA VOLUNT*”:
THE NARRATIVE MEMORY OF THE
TRAGEDY OF QUEEN ISABELLA
AND THE PERIL OF BUDA

In 1539, the 20-year-old Isabella Jagiellon married King John I of Hungary, who was 32 years older than she.¹ One year later, fate presented Queen Isabella with a male child and practically at the same time took her husband from her. These two events determined the course of the rest of Isabella’s life and placed her in the middle of a power struggle of European magnitude in which – essentially until her return to Transylvania in 1556 – she only very rarely had the opportunity to truly exert control over the events taking place around her. Instead, the queen – who faced her destiny with her head held high, though with totally unconcealed pain – was accorded the role of tragic heroine, which she played with gravity befitting the dignity of her regal office. The use of theatrical terminology here is not accidental for two reasons. On the one hand, this terminology signifies the entirely representative role that Isabella, as the widow of the deceased monarch and the mother of the infant king, was forced to play in the shadow of Friar George, who either openly or surreptitiously controlled politics in Hungary almost single-handedly; on the other hand, it reflects the dramatic tone of the public political sphere during the period in question. For Queen Isabella, participation in this domain was completely natural since from her birth she had been raised to one-day exercise the authority of a sovereign. Isabella’s limited capacity to make independent decisions during her life full of dramatic turning points and inability to liberate herself from the framework that had been established for her were the product of historical circumstance.

This sense of destiny is reflected in Isabella’s motto as well: *Sic fata volunt* – as fate wills it. According to historical tradition, Isabella left this motto behind her on two occasions. First in September 1541, when she engraved it into the wall of

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1 See the studies by Ágnes Máté, Péter Molnár and György Palotás in the present volume.

her room at the royal palace in Buda with a knife before permanently evacuating the residence (these words were allegedly visible in the room for decades). She left the motto behind her again in July 1551, when she carved the initial letters of this expression and her name – *S[ic] F[ata] V[olunt] Y[sabella]* – into an oak tree as she traveled through a pass in the Meszes Mountains after surrendering the Holy Crown of Hungary to a representative of Ferdinand I and renouncing her rule over eastern Hungary.² The queen bowing before the inexorable force of destiny: this was the typical self-image that she wanted to express with these two symbolic acts and this same image of her became embedded as a literary motif in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century historiography as well.³

We shall examine the ways in which this motif was formed in light of the narrative memory of the events that took place in 1541. We shall then contrast this with the image that emerges from contemporary recollections. In doing this, we intend to reveal the dynamic connection that existed between literature dealing with historical events and historiography during the early modern period. Subsequently we will attempt to illustrate how the mechanism of memory functioned during this period, an objective that can best be reached through the use of literary terms. According to our point of departure, *fate* is one such literary expression, while the concept of *fatalism* essentially reflects literary thinking, which – taken together with a biblical intellectual world sometimes fused with

2 The abbreviation S.F.V. appeared also on the golden coins minted by Isabella and John Sigismund. Lajos Huszár, *Az Erdélyi Fejedelemség pénzverése*, edited by Gyula Rádóczy. Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1995.

3 Two travelogues from the late sixteenth century report the words that Isabella engraved in the wall of her room at Buda Castle (*Sic fata volunt; Isabella Regina*): Franz Ömich/Omichius, *Beschreibung einer Legation und Reise von Wien aus Ostereich auff Constantinopel, durch den Wolgebornen Herrn David Ungnadn, Freyherrn zu Sonneck... an den Türckischen Keyser, Anno 72 verrichtet*. Güstrow, 1582, 15; and Salomon Schweiger, *Eine neue Reyßbeschreibung auß Teutschland Nach Constantinopel und Jerusalem... in III unterschiedlichen Büchern*. Nuremberg, 1608, 21. In connection to the latter work, see Katalin Németh S., 'Salomon Schweigger útleírásának magyar vonatkozásai', in Gábor Kecskeméti (ed.), *Tarnai Andor- emlékkönyv* (Historia litteraria 2). Budapest: Universitas, 1996, 196. The Spanish mercenary captain Bernardo de Aldana wrote in his memoirs about the letters that Isabella carved into the oak tree in the Meszes Mountains and the stone well that General Giovanni Battista Castaldo had built at this location. See Fernando Escribano Martín (ed.), *La expedición del Maestre de Campo Bernardo de Aldana a Hungría en 1548*. Barcelona: Miraguano Ediciones, 2010; Zoltán Korpás, 'La correspondencia de un soldado español de las guerras en Hungría a mediados del siglo XVI. Comentarios al diario de Bernardo de Aldana (1548–1552)', *Hispania* 206 (2000) 881–910. Bernardo de Aldana's memoirs remained in manuscript form until their initial publication in the following work: Antonio Rodríguez Villa (ed.), *Expedición del maestre de campo Bernardo de Aldana a Hungría en 1548*. Madrid: Medina, 1878. Jacques August de Thou (1553–1617) mentions this episode in the ninth volume of his monumental work *Historiarum sui temporis*: "[Isabella] Cassoviam versus iter direxit. Cum propter angustias viarum inter silvas de curru descendere cogeretur, dum auriga currum traduceret, ipsa retro in Daciam respiciens, pristini culminis e quo deciderat memor altum corde suspirium duxisse dicitur et cum aliud non posset litterata femina, inscripto arbori nomine, haec addidisse, Sic fata volunt, eoque relicto iusti doloris monumento, rursus currum conscendit." Jacques August de Thou... *Historiarum sui temporis ab anno domini 1543 usque ad annum 1607 libri CXXXVIII*. Frankfurt: Kofffurt, 1625, 182.

millenarianism – represented one of the most important features of the Renaissance and the Reformation. As a result of the Turkish conquest, this way of thinking appeared in Hungary with even more intensity and over a more extended period of time than elsewhere in Europe.⁴

At the same time, such an intermingling of the tragic and prophetic outlook was much weaker in Italy, where the archaization of the concepts of *fate* and *fortune* became one of the central elements of literary and historical thinking already from the beginning of the rise of humanism. As a result of this, these concepts were able to assert themselves in pure form in sixteenth-century Italian literary culture. Isabella Jagiellon, whose upbringing was imbued with Italian influences, may have chosen her motto as a result of her exposure to this culture.⁵

In this study, we will take a look at both published and unpublished contemporary narratives regarding the loss of Buda in 1541 in which Isabella's role stands out.⁶ We will start with the “more literary” works intended for a broader audience, then progress toward texts that are either of lower quality

4 For the importance of the concept of fate in the work of poet Miklós Zrínyi (1620–1664), see Tibor Klaniczay, *A fátum és szerencse Zrínyi műveiben*. Budapest: Pázmány Péter Tudományegyetem Bölcsészeti Kara, 1947; and Sándor Bene, ‘A sztoikus Zrínyi’, in Judit Nyerges, Attila Verók and Edina Zvara (eds.), *MONOKgraphia. Tanulmányok Monok István 60. születésnapjára*. Budapest: Kossuth Kiadó, 2016, 69–86. For the prophetic outlook and its connection to the Turkish threat in historical thinking in Hungary and elsewhere in Europe, see Marjorie Reeves, *The Prophetic Sense of History in Medieval and Renaissance Europe*. Aldershot: Ashgate/Variorum, 1999; Pál Fodor, *In Quest of the Golden Apple: Imperial Ideology, Politics and Military Administration in the Ottoman Empire* (Analecta Isisiana). Istanbul: Isis, 2000, 71–103; Pál Ács, ‘The Names of the Holy Maccabees. Erasmus and the Origin of the Hungarian Protestant Martirology’, in Marcell Sebők (ed.), *Republic of Letters, Humanism, Humanities* (Collegium Budapest Workshop Series 15). Frankfurt–New York: Campus Verlag, 2005, 45–62; and Johannes Ehmann, *Luther, Türken und Islam. Eine Untersuchung zum Türken- und Islambild Martin Luthers (1515–1546)* (Quellen un Forschungen zur Reformationsgeschichte 80). Heidelberg: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2015².

5 Following the Ockhamist antecedents and naturally Dante, the Great Plague, and Petrarch's *Fortunae* book, Chancellor of Florence Coluccio Salutati wrote a treatise around the years 1396–1399 entitled *De fato et fortuna*; the *Quattrocento* Italian humanists also kept this question alive (Poggio Bracciolini, Leon Battista Alberti, Lorenzo Valla, etc.); after which Pico della Mirandola and – partially in argument with Mirandola – Pietro Pomponazzi made the subjects of more serious philosophical investigation. The problem acquired an explicit theological complexion with the spread of the Reformation (see the dispute between Erasmus and Luther). Just a small sample of the entire library of works available on this subject: Charles B. Schmitt and Quentin Skinner (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988, 641–667; and Paul Richard Blum, *Philosophy of Religion in the Renaissance*. London–New York: Routledge, 2016, 55–76. At the same time, the concept of *fatum* may have retained its original, more obscure tragedy-of-destiny meaning in the everyday educated language and mentality: the mottos of Queen Isabella and historiographer Paolo Giovio (*Fato prudentia minor*: “wisdom is smaller than fate”).

6 Paolo Giovio, whose account of the loss of Buda will be examined in this study, and Francesco Guicciardini, sent each other excerpts from the works that they were writing. T. C. Price Zimmermann, ‘Francesco Guicciardini and Paolo Giovio’, *Annali d’Italianistica* 2 (1984) 34–52; for this phenomenon in early modern Italy in general: Peter Burke, ‘Oral and Manuscript Culture in Early Modern Italy’, in Luca Degli Innocenti and Brian Richardson (eds.), *Interactions between Orality and Writing in Early Modern Italian Culture*. London: Routledge, 2016, 21–30.

from a linguistic perspective and/or aimed at a narrower group of readers. The first work to be examined will be the drama, which remained in manuscript form until the end of the twentieth century, that Venetian patrician Daniele Barbaro (1514–1570) wrote about Isabella. This will be followed by an account of the loss of Buda by Paolo Giovio (1483–1552) that until now the authors of scholarly literature have claimed served as one of the most important sources for Barbaro’s work. We will then examine the letter that Antal Verancsics wrote to Giovio at about the same time that Barbaro produced his text. Finally, we will survey accounts and reports that internal witnesses wrote immediately after the events in question. However, before we turn to concrete texts, it is worthwhile to briefly examine the historical background of the loss of Buda and the current status of related research.

BUDA OPPUGNATA

The Turkish occupation of the capital city of the Kingdom of Hungary in 1541 entailed much more significant and far-reaching consequences than the Battle of Mohács in 1526: this fact has dawned on the horizon of present-day research, though contemporaries clearly perceived and gave voice to it.⁷ These consequences are well-known. As part of the sultan’s so-called “great strategy,” Hungary became the main theater in the Ottoman–Habsburg conflict, thus leading to the spectacular failure of the policy of King John and Friar George aimed at maintaining balance between the two great powers. However, neither one of these powers had enough strength to bring all of Hungary under its control and by 1570 an Ottoman vassal state, the Principality of Transylvania, had formed in the eastern part of the realm. This principality, which possessed only limited independence, though a great degree of internal freedom, was essentially able to preserve the illusion of Hungarian state sovereignty until the Ottoman reprisals that took place in 1658 following the failed military campaign that Prince of Transylvania George Rákóczi II conducted in Poland.⁸

It is not necessary for us here to recall the history of the loss of Buda and the formation of the Budin Eyalet, which were parts of a longer sequence of

⁷ Several anti-Turkish *oratio* were written under the direct impact of the events that appeared in numerous published editions. Among these were Ferenc Frangepán’s address at the imperial assembly in Regensburg on June 9, 1541, speeches that Tranquillus Andronicus and Joachim Camerarius delivered immediately after the capture of Buda, Jacopo Sadoletto’s homily, Clemens Janicki’s Latin-language elegy and Mavro Vetranović’s Croatian-language *tužba*. See Péter Kasza, ‘Buda Oppugnata 1541 – egy korszakváltó esemény új megközelítésben’, *Tanulmányok Budapest múltjából* 42 (2017) 7–28. The Battle of Mohács is generally depicted as the caesura in non-Hungarian scholarly literature, while the fall of the capital city is regarded as an event of secondary importance. For a prime example of this phenomenon, see the following short biography of Queen Isabella (which contains other factual errors as well): Roland H. Bainton, *Women of the Renaissance: From Spain to Scandinavia*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1977, 217–229.

⁸ Pál Fodor, *The Unbearable Weight of Empire. The Ottomans in Central Europe – a Failed Attempt at Universal Monarchy (1390–1566)*. Budapest: Research Centre for the Humanities–HAS, 2016².

events. However, it should be noted that the search for those responsible began almost immediately: the powerful and unequivocal will of Sultan Süleyman was obviously not enough to bring forth the loss of Buda – the ineffectiveness of the two armies that Ferdinand sent to the city one after the other and the protraction of negotiations taking place between the two kings of Hungary with Polish mediation also played a role.⁹ As we will see, the contention that Isabella bore limited responsibility for the loss of Buda emerged as well, though this claim stands in stark opposition to the previously mentioned schematic (self-)image of the tragic victim of the events.

The loss of Buda had tragic consequences in Hungarian history, while the siege of Buda conducted under the command of Wilhelm von Roggendorf claimed an enormous number of victims and itself was no less tragic. The battle fought below the walls of Buda Castle, on Gellért Hill and on the waters of the Danube just before the arrival of Sultan Süleyman's main army in August, 1541, and in which several thousand Austrian, German and Czech mercenaries were killed represented the final episode of the siege. In terms of Isabella's personal destiny, the "only" changes that occurred after September 1541 were that she was forced to change the location of her royal residence and the territory of her son's state had shrunk to half its previous size. From Isabella's perspective, only one truly tragic incident occurred during these events: on August 29, the queen was forced to endure an entire day in a state of helpless uncertainty as she waited to find out if her one-year-old son would return from the Süleyman's camp outside Buda and to learn what the sultan had decided with regard to her own fate. It is no accident that Daniele Barbaro used this scene – the mother forced to painfully tolerate her child being taken away – as the basis for his dramatic depiction of the loss of Buda that remains unique to this day.

BARBARO'S TRAGEDY

The Venetian patrician, polymath, historiographer, political official and humanist Daniele Barbaro,¹⁰ who has been remembered primarily for his translation of

9 Endre Veress, *Izabella királyné 1519–1559*. Budapest: Magyar Történelmi Társulat, 1901; Pál Fodor, 'Ottoman Policy towards Hungary, 1520–1541', *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 45:2–3 (1991) 271–345; Géza Dávid and Pál Fodor (eds.), *Ottomans, Hungarians, and Habsburgs in Central Europe. The Military Confines in the Era of Ottoman Conquest*. Leiden–Boston–Köln: Brill, 2000; Teréz Oborni, *Az ördögös Barát. Fráter György (1482–1551)*. Pécs–Budapest: Kronosz Kiadó–Magyar Történelmi Társulat, 2017.

10 Daniele Barbaro was the scion of a patrician family that was very influential in the Republic of Venice during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and produced numerous statesmen and scholars during this period. His uncle was the prominent humanist Ermolao Barbaro (1454–1493), while his younger brother Marcantonio Barbaro (1518–1595) had a successful political career, serving as Venice's ambassador to France and the Sublime Porte and standing several times as a candidate to become the *doge* of the republic. Daniele Barbaro was a member of the Accademia degli Infiammati in Padua and engaged in significant activity as both a philologist and a political official. Therefore it is not surprising that he played a role in the dialogue (*Della perfettione della vita politica*) praising the form of government in the Republic of Venice that

Vitruvius, presumably wrote his 2,235-line drama entitled *Tragedia* around the year 1548. The only existing autograph manuscript of this work is kept at the Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana in Venice.¹¹ According to a later subtitle, Barbaro wrote *Tragedia* at the age of 24, though this is certainly inaccurate: perhaps the person who recorded the information on the initial page of the drama wrote 24 instead of 34, in which case Barbaro finished the work in 1548. The year 1548 as *ante quem* is certain because the only contemporary mention of *Tragedia* appears in a letter that Pietro Aretino wrote to Barbaro in April 1548 in which he praises the text from the drama that the author had sent to him.¹² One can only speculate why the drama remained unpublished and was not performed: the carefully clarified text could have easily been divided into a five-act play and the plot of the work is complete.¹³ The most probable explanation is that Barbaro, who from the end of 1548 served as the representative of *La Serenissima* in London, had no time to deal with the publication of *Tragedia* after completing the work and never returned to this task later in his life.¹⁴

As other dramas that followed the classical patterns of the *Cinquecento*, the text of *Tragedia* features monologues, dialogues and chorale insertions that follow one another in diverse, metrical lines.¹⁵ One cannot exclude the possibility that Barbaro wrote the drama with a musical purpose in mind (in this case, the text

Paolo Paruta (1540–1598) published in 1579. For the Accademia degli Infiammati: Valerio Vianello, *Il letterato, l'Accademia, il libro. Contributi sulla cultura veneta del Cinquecento*. Padova: Editrice Antenore, 1988. For a recent work on Daniele Barbaro's life and works: Laura Moretti, 'Daniele Barbaro: la vita e i libri', in Susy Marcon and Laura Moretti (eds.), *Daniele Barbaro 1515–70. Letteratura, scienze e arti nella Venezia del Rinascimento*. Venezia: Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, 2015, 15–32; and Daria Perocco, 'Daniele Barbaro ambasciatore e letterato', in Frédérique Lemerle, Vasco Zara, Pierre Caye and Laura Moretti (eds.), *Daniele Barbaro 1514–1570. Vénitien, patricien, humaniste*. Turnhout: Brepols, 2017.

11 Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana di Venezia, It. IX 29 (=6590): *Tragedia della regina Isabella, vedova di Giovanni, re d'Ungheria*. Its publications: Corinne Lucas, 'Tragedia, text inédit de Daniele Barbaro', in Adelin Charles Fiorato (ed.), *Discours littéraires et pratiques politiques* (Cahiers de la Renaissance italienne 1). Paris: Université de La Sorbonne Nouvelle (Paris III), 1987, 89–162; Corinne Lucas, 'Daniele Barbaro–Tragedia', *Quaderni Veneti* 15 (1992) 7–80; Ferdinando Neri, *La tragedia italiana del Cinquecento*. Firenze: Galletti e Cocci, 1904, 108–116; Sándor Varga, *Barbaro Daniel (1513–1570)*. Budapest: Pátria Nyomda, 1944; Szabolcs Ö. Barlay, *Romon virág. Fejezetek a Mohács utáni reneszánszról*. Budapest: Gondolat Kiadó, 1986, 60–71; Corinne Lucas, 'Jeux de miroirs entre Bude et Venise dans la Tragedia de Daniele Barbaro', in Adelin Charles Fiorato (ed.), *Discours littéraires et pratiques politiques*. Paris: Éditions de la Sorbonne, 1995, 61–88; Valeria Cimmieri, 'The Performative Power of Diplomatic Discourse in the Italian Tragedies Inspired by the Wars Against the Turks', in Nathalie Rivère de Carles (ed.), *Early Modern Diplomacy, Theater and Soft Power: The Making of Peace*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016, 93–112.

12 Di Aprile in Vinetia 1548: *Il quarto libro dell lettere di M. Pietro Aretino*. Parigi: Appresso Matteo il Maestro, 1609, 191.

13 Perocco, 'Daniele Barbaro ambasciatore e letterato', 402, note 50.

14 Barbaro wrote a letter to Aretino from London in early 1549. Daniel Barbaro D. Ambasciatore al Signor Pietro Aretino; Di Londra 28. Genaro del 1549: *Lettere scritte al Signor Pietro Aretino da molti signori, comunità, donne di valore, poeti e altri eccellentissimi spiriti*, vol. 2. Venezia: Francesco Marcolini, 1552, 137–138.

15 Neri, *La tragedia italiana del Cinquecento*; Renzo Cremante (ed.), *Teatro del Cinquecento*, vol. 2, *La tragedia*. Milano–Napoli: Ricciardi, 1988.

was probably the libretto for a never-completed opera); in the event of a prose performance, the appearance of the chorus signifies the end of the drama's acts. The plot unfolds in Buda over a period of just a few hours shortly before the Turkish capture of the city as Isabella and her entourage await and then receive Süleyman's envoy, who transmits the sultan's request to see the queen's young son at his camp. A Turkish messenger subsequently arrives to the royal court to inform Isabella and her counselors that they must leave Buda for Transylvania, which the sultan has set aside for the queen and her son.

The allegorical figure representing Pain (*La Pena*) recites the prologue, after which the events that take place during the first half of the drama – essentially following the pattern of ancient Greek and Roman tragedy – serve to heighten the ambience of impending doom.¹⁶ The dialogue and monologue involving the members of Isabella's court (two *Consiglieri*, a *Secretario* representing Friar George and the secondary characters *Cortegiano*, *Barone* and *Amico*) reflect the Hungarian political leadership's doubts and uncertainties, which culminate in the apparently joyful entry of the Turkish envoy (*Noncio Turcheso*) accompanied by a choral song from the Buda guards celebrating victory and peace. The envoy does not present Süleyman's message directly on stage; instead the dialogue between the secondary characters and the envoy's conceited monologue reveal that the sultan has summoned the toddler John Sigismund to his camp. The main character, the queen (*Reina*) appears on stage only after this, immediately following the choral song calling for resistance against the Turks. The queen's dialogue with the *Secretario* (lines 1,315–1,742) represent the climax of the drama. The queen has already heard the bad news, which she did not receive calmly in the least. The *Secretario* then turns toward the audience and introduces the scene:

Rotto ha il dolor il freno
d'ogni prudenza, quando
fu detta alla Reina
la sospetta dimanda
di voler il fanciullo.
La pietà sua materna
non ebbe alcun rittegno;
però si deide al pianto,
alle querele, ai gridi.¹⁷

Pain broke the brake
of all prudence, when
the suspicious request
of wanting the boy
was said to the queen.
Her maternal compassion
had no restraint;
she broke out in tears,
cried and lamented.

Isabella, forgetting about her dignity (*vinta del dolore / si scorda del suo onore*), began to rave in anger, unwilling to accept that she had no choice, that she must bow to the will of the sultan. She then calls upon those in her midst to fight:

16 Based on this, Sándor Varga and following him Szabolcs Ö. Barlay surmised that the original title of Barbaro's drama may have been *La Pena* rather than *Tragedia*. Varga, *Barbaro Daniel*; Barlay, *Romon virág*.

17 *Tragedia*, 1361–1368.

Alle difese, all'armi,
alle torri, alle mura!
Difendete l'onore,
difendete la fede,
la libertà, la vita!¹⁸

To the defenses, to arms,
to the towers, to the walls!
Defend your honor,
defend the faith,
liberty and life!

The queen then speaks to the soul of her late husband and reveals her greatest fear – that the sultan will take the young prince away from her and have him raised in Turkey.

Guarda Signor benigno,
in che stato si trova
la tua fedel compagna,
la tua diletta serva;
mira la bella pianta,
in cui revive tua semente santa,
in che maligna terra
da velenoso umore
esser nodrita deve.¹⁹

Behold benign Lord,
the situation in which
your faithful companion
and beloved servant finds herself;
gaze upon the beautiful plant
in which your holy seed as sprouted
in what malignant earth
from what poisonous humors
it must imbibe.

Meanwhile, Isabella's anger slowly softens into helpless grief. The queen asks God for the intervention of her husband, though not in order to mitigate the punishment that has rightfully been imposed upon them, since she is prepared to die and lose the kingdom as well:

attendo la vendetta
che ne tolga la vita
che ne spoglie del regno,
ch'il nostro nome estingua.²⁰

I await the vengeance
that shall take our lives away,
that shall destroy the kingdom,
that shall extinguish our names.

But at least to show mercy on her son, so that he not become a servant of the Turks:

volgiti a i giusti preghi
dinanzi al tuo Signore
che difenda 'l tuo onore
nella persona mia;
ch'il tuo figlio innocente
servo non sia di questa iniqua
gente.²¹

Turn with pure prayer
toward your Lord
so that he may defend your honor
in my person;
so that your innocent son
shall not serve this evil people.

18 *Tragedia*, 1397–1401.

19 *Tragedia*, 1431–1439.

20 *Tragedia*, 1455–1459.

21 *Tragedia*, 1463–1467.

The task of the *Secretario* is then to appeal to the queen's better judgment. On the one hand, he cites the force of necessity:

Il consiglio ch'io dico
non è in tutto consiglio,
ma seco ha il compagnia
forz'e necessitate;²²

The counsel that I give
is not entirely advice,
but its fellows are
force and necessity.

On the other hand, he offers hope to Isabella in the form of fatalism: if God had wanted to destroy her, he would have already done so before the sultan reached Buda, because this would have helped the Austrians to capture the castle:

Tu sai con quanta rabbia e quanto
sdegno
la casa Austria, oltre la onesta
usanza,
s'è mossa contra te, contra 'l tuo
regno,
tu sai con quante angosce di tue
genti,
tra quai sospetti e intolerabili
pene,
l'assedio hai sopportato in questa
terra,
che nessun'ora dal tornar del sole
sin'alla sera e dalla sera all'alba
fu mai tranquilla e riposata un
punto.
Infìn tu sai, ché pur ora l'intendi,
com'a Dio piace il tuo nimico
vinto.
Che si può dir, se non questi segni
mostran che sian finite le fatiche
e consumati i danni ei tuoi
travagli,
ch'Egli è Dio di pietà, di
compassione,
né in tutto vuole tua distruttione?²³

You know well with what great anger
and how unworthily
the Austrian house moved against you,
setting your honor aside, attacking your
kingdom,
you know well with what anguish,
among what intrigues and intolerable
pains
your people endured the siege in this
land,
that not a single hour or minute passed
tranquilly
from sunrise to sunset,
from dusk until dawn.
You also know, since you can now see it,
how God likes your enemy defeated.
What can show better than these signs
that your troubles are over,
that your suffering and anguish have
passed,
that He is a God of pity, of compassion,
nor does He want your destruction?

At the end of this dialogue, the queen slowly realizes that she cannot do anything else than preserve hope; the *Secretario*, Friar George, promises to go to the sultan's camp to ensure that the queen's young son is sent back to her as soon as possible.

22 *Tragedia*, 1553–1556.

23 *Tragedia*, 1599–1614.

The next scene begins with the presence of Isabella, who is having difficulty parting with her son, the boy's nurses and Friar George. Isabella's anguish is indescribable, though this anguish turns to indignation when another Turkish messenger (*Messo Turchescho*) arrives and exhorts the queen to send her son on his way to Süleyman's camp; furthermore, the messenger informs both Isabella and the *Secretario* that the sultan will occupy Buda and that the queen will receive Transylvania, to where she will be allowed to go freely with all her treasure and where she can rule far from all danger and in peace along with her son:

A voi largo paese e più sicuro
 nella gran Transilvania si provvede:
 ivi con la tua gente
 con tue ricchezze, e col tuo caro
 figlio
 lontano da periglio
 vivrai lietamente.²⁴

To you a vast and more secure country
 does the great Transylvania provide:
 there with your people
 with your riches, and with your dear
 son
 away from peril
 you will live happily.

Isabella, though she protests, must accept the decision, while Friar George and – almost aggressively – the Turkish messenger also exhort her to do this. The queen therefore sends her son on his way and in the final scene of the drama conducts a dialogue with the chorus in which she mourns both her fate and that of her county, which she qualifies as “even worse than death,” and laments that she can neither die proudly nor return to her father in Poland:

O me misera e trista,
 almen potess'io gire
 col mio figliuolo dove
 il mio diletto padre
 tien di Polonia il scetro
 e ivi la mia vita
 e i miei danni finire,
 over arditamente combattendo
 per la fede morire!
 O amici, o vicini,
 o voi che la natura
 meco congiunse con suoi dolci
 nodi,
 ove siete, ove state?
 Non vi prende pietate
 di quei miseri modi
 con che, misera, io sono
 spogliata e priva d'ogni libertade?

Oh me miserable and sad,
 if only I could return
 with my little son to where
 my beloved father
 holds the scepter of Poland
 and there finish my life
 and my ordeals,
 or at least boldly fighting
 for the faith die!
 Oh friends, or neighbors,
 or you to whom nature
 has joined me with his sweet bonds,
 where are you, where are you?
 Does pity not take hold of you
 to see the wretched ways
 with which, miserably, I am
 divested and deprived of all liberty?

24 *Tragedia*, 2013–2018.

Perché non riguardate
con benign'occhi ormai le mie ruine,
certe e triste indovine delle vostre?

...

O regno antico, o sacri tempi, o
torri
alte, o palazzi ornati,
o mia nobilitade,
com'in un punto io perdo
ogni cosa e la speme
di riavervi mai!²⁵

Why do you not look
with benign eyes upon my sad ruin,
which certainly foretells your own?

...

Oh ancient kingdom, your sacred
temples,
your high towers, your ornate palaces,
Oh my nobility,
how in a single instant I have lost
everything and the hope
of ever returning.

The text of *Tragedia* reveals that Daniele Barbaro was familiar with the events that took place in Buda during the period August 28–September 5, 1541, though presumably for dramaturgical reasons he reduced the time in which the plot of his work unfolds to just a few hours. The merging of the figures and behavior of the three Turkish envoys and messengers who actually appeared at the Buda court on three different days in the characters of the *Noncio Turcheso* and the *Messo Turchescho* represent an example of the methods that Barbaro used to shorten the duration of the plot. In fact, Ali Orudj *Chavush* arrived to the royal court with an invitation to Süleyman's camp on August 28, while another Turkish envoy appeared at the court on August 31 in order to deliver the letter in which the sultan informed Isabella that she and her son would receive Transylvania and the following day an Agha of the Janissaries turned up to demand that the queen surrender the castle. Almost any of the works examined below may have served as the concrete textual source from which Barbaro derived the information that he used to construct the plot of *Tragedia*. One cannot exclude the possibility that the author may have been familiar to some degree with all of these works and that he learned about them from Antal Verancsics. Indeed in 1548, Verancsics was sent on a diplomatic mission to Rome and on May 22 of this year sent a letter to Paolo Giovio in which he criticized the Italian historiographer's unpublished history of the loss of Buda and presented a narrative version of this event that would have better suited the tastes of his sovereign and his employer – Queen Isabella and Friar George, respectively.²⁶ However, before expounding upon this, it would be worthwhile to take a closer look at Giovio's work.

²⁵ *Tragedia*, 2209–2225; 2238–2243.

²⁶ This letter from Antal Verancsics to Paolo Giovio, which is examined in detail in this study, is the only existing source regarding Verancsics's visit to Italy in 1548. Although the purpose of his trip is unknown, one might surmise that if he went to Rome, Isabella and Friar George may have had affairs that needed to be settled in this city. There is no evidence indicating that Verancsics had had any connection to Daniele Barbaro or anybody in his family, though his known and published letters confirm that he maintained friendly relations with at least the following members of the patrician élite in Venice: Marcantonio Da Mula (1506–1572), whose name, as

GIOVIO'S BUDA BOOK

Paolo Giovio's 45-book history of Europe from the French invasion of the Italian peninsula in 1494 to the death of King Francis I of France in 1547 was first published in print in Florence near the end of his life.²⁷ Giovio, the longtime Bishop of Nocera, dealt extensively in this history of Europe with the coalition that formed against the Turks during the period, therefore he devoted particular attention to the events that led to the fall of Buda in 1541.²⁸ According to the present arrangement of the text, Giovio's examination of these events begins with the death of King John in the middle of book 39 and – with the exception of a short deviation to the topic of the imperial assemblies held in Worms and Regensburg beginning in late 1540 – ends with the departure of Queen Isabella from Buda around the middle of book 40. This section of the work may therefore be regarded as a compact unit, which Giovio furnished with a separate introduction in which he underscored the political sensitivity of the theme in plain, Erasmus-inspired language and rebuked European sovereigns for having allowed their feuds to strengthen the Turks.²⁹

The events follow one another in an orderly fashion in Paolo Giovio's narrative. The author provides a detailed, realistic and well-informed account of the fall of Buda, despite consistently misspelling Hungarian, Turkish, German,

that of Daniele Barbaro, is associated with philosophical works and high-ranking political office; and Carlo Cappello (1492–1546) and his sons, primarily Francesco, who received Verancsics as a guest at his house in Murano in 1546. See László Szalay (ed.), *Verancsics Antal m. kir. helytartó, esztergomi érsek összes munkái*, vol. 6, *Végyes levelek 1538–1549* (Monumenta Hungariae Historica II; Scriptorum 9). Pest: Eggenberger, 1860, 182–199; Giuseppe Gullino, 'Marcantonio Da Mula', *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 32 (1986);

http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/marcantonio-da-mula_%28Dizionario-Biografico%29/; and Angelo Ventura, 'Carlo Cappello', *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 18 (1975)

[http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/carlo-cappello_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)/](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/carlo-cappello_(Dizionario-Biografico)/).

27 *Pauli Iovii Novocomensis episcopi Historiarum sui temporis*, vols. 1–2. Firenze: Laurentii Torrentini Ducalis Typographi, 1550–1552. Modern publication of this work: Dante Visconti (ed.), *Historiarum sui temporis 1; 2/1 (Pauli Iovii Opera 3–4)*. Roma: Istituto poligrafico dello Stato–Libreria dello Stato, 1957, 1964; and T. C. Price Zimmermann (ed.), *Historiarum sui temporis 2/2 (Pauli Iovii Opera 5)*. Roma: Istituto poligrafico dello Stato–Libreria dello Stato, 1985.

28 See Emmanuelle Pujeau, *L'Europe et les Turcs. La croisade de l'humaniste Paolo Giovio*. Toulouse: Presses Universitaires du Midi, 2015; T. C. Price Zimmermann, *Paolo Giovio: The Historian and the Crisis of Sixteenth-Century Italy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995; and Eric W. Cochrane, *Historians and Historiography in the Italian Renaissance*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981, 366–376.

29 "Scio me aliquando liberius quam deceret totius praesertim orbis gesta praescribentem in explicandis principum consiliis, quibus haud dubie perituri sumus, ab instituta brevitate discessisse, sed certe boni mortales in hac publici doloris et iam propinqui luctus causa longius provento facilem omnino veniam dabunt, quum intelligent, quanta insania summi reges praeclaram occasionem non propulsandi modo, verum ingenti victoria delendi eius hostis amiserint, qui accersitus ultro in cervices nostras cruentum gladium securus exercet, exercebitque tamdiu insolenter atque feliciter quamdiu vigeant reges, qui nulla pietate et summa vecordia perdendo orbi nefariis inter se armis depugnent; scilicet ut postquam mutuas vires attriverint, occidentis quoque imperium cuncta iam ex tuto fidenter invadenti barbaro foede relinquant." *Historiarum sui temporis*, vol. 2. Firenze: Lorenzo Torrentino, 1552, 348.

Czech, Polish and other sorts of proper names. Giovio starts with the conclusion of the Treaty of Várad, continuing with King John's marriage to Isabella, the birth of their son, the monarch's death, the subsequent negotiations in Constantinople, Ferdinand's dispatch of an envoy, the Leonhard von Vels- and Wilhelm von Roggendorf-led military campaign, the siege of Buda and the decisive big battle and concluding with the arrival of Süleyman, the summons of the heir to the throne to the sultan's camp and the Turkish capture of the capital city. Giovio wrote about Isabella in several places in this account, offering the reader a much more nuanced image of the queen than those projected in literary topoi.

Giovio's description of the royal wedding reveals that Isabella was not only beautiful, but very strong-willed as well.³⁰ The queen then acquires power following the death of her husband.³¹ Isabella did not subsequently wish to relinquish this power – a circumstance that Giovio attributed to the Sforza blood that coursed in her veins. The author vividly illustrates this with the episode in which Isabella very aggressively persuades Péter Petrovics and Friar George to permit her to receive the envoys that Ferdinand sent to Buda (in late 1540) as well, then theatrically plays the role before these envoys of the weak widow who has become exhausted from her mourning and is unable to make a decision, whereas she is actually prepared to call upon the Turks to help her defend her newly acquired throne.³² It is therefore not surprising that, according

30 "*Nec multo post Ioannes... uxorem duxit Isabellam Sigismundi Sarmatarum regis filiam, virili eruditoque ingenio puellam, et quod alliciendi animi multum interfuit, Italico lepore et venustate Polonica peramabilem.*" *Historiarum sui temporis*, vol. 2, 349.

31 "*Caeterum ius imperii Isabellae reginae communi procerum studio delatum, ea lege, ut in publicis litteris filii matrisque nomine praescriberetur, eodemque titulo regia moneta cuderetur.*" *Historiarum sui temporis*, vol. 2, 351–52.

32 "*Exceptus Budae Salma aegre impetravit ut ad reginam admitteretur: Georgius enim et Vichius muliebri ingenio diffidentes, denegatum colloqui officium nimio reginae dolore et lachrymis excusabant, quum se peculiari munere mandata audire referreque paratos esse dicerent, postquam viduae reginae regisque pueri tutelam demandante obstantemque Ioanne rege suscepissent. Sed eam regina de se imbecilli iudicii opinionem, quam tutores conciperent, ad contumeliam revocabat, quum Sarmatico et Sfortiano sanguine progenita, non viriles modo, sed plane regios gereret spiritus, diceretque sibi in necem manus se allaturam, nisi legato aditus in cubiculum daretur. Id erat atratum obscurumque, utpote quod de more coelestem lucem excluderet, ipsa ignobili in strato residebat, neglecto ornatu et pallida facie, sed oculis nihil tum in lachrymas proclinatis, voce tamen et cervicis gestu ita composita, ut diuturnu defessae luctu exaruisse potius lachrymas, quam discessisse ex animo moerorem ostenderet. Feminae siquidem mentem regnandi cupido iam invaseret, atque ita possidebat, ut omnia imminentis belli pericula contemneret, ac ipsos denique barbaros, ut regium nomen tueretur omnino evocandos existimaret. Itaque Salmae cum multo verborum honore mandata explicanti demisse respondit, eam esse Fortunam sexus ac aetatis suae, ut orbata rege coniuge et diuturnis corporis ac animi doloribus perturbata, neque suscipere, neque terminare consilium queat; quum in re longa gravissima Sigismundum patrem omnino consulendum existimet, eius autem regis tantam esse virtutem atque iustitiam, ut Ferdinandus nullo alio disceptatore atque arbitro in ea controversia uti velit. Proinde se petere spatium ac idoneum tempus, quo pater consuli posset. Se enim ab eius sententia minime discessuram, ac idem facturos proceres Hungaros arbitrari; quod si id morae spatium denegetur, atque armis agendum putent, egregiam certe laudem non ferent, inquit, Caesar et Ferdinandus, si viduam fletu consumptam et vagientem in cunis puerum regem oppugnatum advenerint.*" *Historiarum sui temporis*, vol. 2, 354.

to Giovio's narrative, Isabella was the one who at the end of the year 1540 requested military assistance against Ferdinand's troops from the Turkish beys along the border and ensured that the Turkish army that finally arrived to Buda in the early spring after encountering delays during the winter received sufficient supplies of food and military equipment.

However, Isabella disappears from the scene in *Historiarum sui temporis* following the arrival of General von Roggendorf's army and the beginning of the actual siege of Buda and returns only after the arrival of the sultan to the city in book 40. In this section of the book, Isabella no longer appears as the cold, calculating queen as she did previously, but as a sensitive woman and mother who attempts to save as many captives as possible. Isabella was horrified to learn that Süleyman wished to see her son at his camp, though ultimately decided to comply with the sultan's request. Following the boy's return, the queen intervenes on behalf of the Hungarian lords detained at the Turkish camp. She writes a letter to Süleyman imploring him to set the lords free and sends some of her own jewels to the sultan's daughter as a gift. Later Isabella tries to obtain the release of Bálint Török as well, though the Turks take him back to Constantinople with them because they regard him to pose a greatest threat to their interests. This Isabella lies closer in character to the female figure of the queen that Daniele Barbaro portrayed in *Tragedia*, as the following lines from *Historiarum sui temporis* demonstrate: "Thus the queen, although amid tears and cursing the despot's perfidy with a silent sigh, apparently bowed before the force of constraint and withdrew from the castle and the city under the barbarians' condition that she leave behind untouched the cannons, military equipment kept in the armories and stores held in the granaries."³³

In light of these facts, one may conjecture that Paolo Giovio used two sources pertaining to Isabella. The first of these sources may have been a pro-Habsburg account that depicted Isabella's hunger for power as one of the main reasons why Ferdinand eventually chose the option of armed conflict. The royal courts in both Buda and Vienna naturally attempted to play for time and persuade the sultan to take action that would be to their benefit. The second source was certainly pro-Szapolyai and Giovio's presentation of contrasting viewpoints about Isabella was presumably not an accident, but the product of his consciously embraced objectivity and his detail-rich manner of expression. Antal Verancsics, the author of our next text, praised Giovio's impartiality. In 1548, therefore at around the same time as Daniele Barbaro wrote his drama, Verancsics sent a letter to Giovio in which he corrected and supplemented the manuscript of the account of the fall of Buda that appeared in *Historiarum sui temporis*.³⁴

33 "Itaque regina vel cum lachrymis et tacito gemitu, tyranni perfidiam detestata, sed tum necessitati dissimulenter cedens, arce atque urbe excelsit, ea a Barbaris imposita lege, ut tormenta aenea et quicquid militaris instrumenti armamentariis inerat et commeatus in horreis, omnino relinqueret." *Historiarum sui temporis*, vol. 2, 374.

34 Letter from Antal Verancsics to Paolo Giovio, Venezia, May 22, 1548: "Nihil enim praetermittis, quod a lectore desiderari possit, adeo rerum gestarum omnes partes expendis, adeo omnia historiae

ANTAL VERANCSICS CORRECTS GIOVIO

One year before switching his allegiance to King Ferdinand in 1549, Antal Verancsics³⁵ wrote a letter from Venice to Paolo Giovio in which he corrected minor details in *Historiarum sui temporis* and supplemented the Lombard humanist's Buda history with very detailed information that occasionally reached the depth of psychology in its analysis of character.³⁶ Verancsics's letter was almost as long as Giovio's Buda history and although never finished shows in its degree of elaboration that the writer worked very hard on it.³⁷ Verancsics presumably did not even send the letter to Giovio in its existing form.

The letter introducing the text that Antal Verancsics wrote from Venice on March 22, 1548, reveals that the previous year he had received the 28-book manuscript of Paolo Giovio's history from Stanisław Wapowski. Verancsics found several errors in this manuscript and took the liberty of writing a letter to Giovio and because he was already planning to travel to Rome wanted to meet personally with the author.³⁸ Published sources contain no information regarding Verancsics's

membra circumspicis, et in quoddam corpus non integrum solum sed etiam plenum redigis. Quod quum in aliis, qui aevo nostro lucubrantur non invenio; tuas equidem solius historias justas continentes et omni ex parte absolutas non dubito affirmare." László Szalay (ed.), *Verancsics Antal m. kir. helytartó, esztergomi érsek összes munkái*, vol. 1 (Monumenta Hungariae Historica II; Scriptorum 2). Pest: Eggenberger, 1857, 178.

35 Antal Verancsics, who was born in Šibenik, Croatia, was undoubtedly the most multi-faceted figure among the members of the humanist-political élite in Hungary during the period in question. Verancsics studied at the University of Padua and served as a special emissary for King John. In 1549, he switched his allegiance to Ferdinand. He became the Bishop of Pécs in 1553, later the Bishop of Eger and at the end of his life the Archbishop of Esztergom and the royal governor. Verancsics's historical collection, his own historical and literary works and his correspondence are contained in the following 12-volume work: László Szalay and Gusztáv Wenzel (eds.), *Verancsics Antal m. kir. helytartó, esztergomi érsek összes munkái*, vols. 1–12. Pest–Budapest: Eggenberger, 1857–1875. For information regarding Verancsics's life and works, see Ignác Acsády, 'Verancsics Antal és Szerémi György', *Irodalomtörténeti Közlemények* 4 (1894) 1–59; Pongrácz Sörös, 'Verancsics Antal az erdélyi udvarnál', *Magyar Sión* 11 (1897) 898–923; Pongrácz Sörös, *Verancsics Antal élete*. Esztergom: Buzárovits Gusztáv könyvnyomda, 1898; Emma Bartoniek, *Fejezetek a XV–XVII. századi magyarországi történetírás történetéből*, edited by Ágnes Ritoókné Szalay. Budapest: MTA ITI–MTA Könyvtár, 1975, 35–56; Marianna D. Birnbaum, *Humanists in a Shattered World: Croatian and Hungarian Latinity in the Sixteenth Century*. Columbus, OH: Slavica Publishers, 1985; Tomislav Pavičić, *Antun Vrančić. Znameniti Šibenski Humanist*. Šibenik: Muzej grada Šibenika, 2004; József Bessenyei, 'Antonio Veranzio e le sue opere storiografiche', in Adriano Papo and Gizella Nemeth Papo (eds.), *L'Umanesimo Latino in Ungheria. Atti del Convegno Internazionale di Studi Budapest, 18 apr. 2005*. Treviso: Fondazione Cassamarca, 2005, 121–129.

36 Szalay (ed.), *Verancsics Antal m. kir. helytartó, esztergomi érsek összes munkái*, vol. 1, 178–225.

37 The facts that the page numbering differs from that in the first edition of *Historiarum sui temporis* and that Verancsics mentions only one book suggest that Giovio's Buda history was composed of a single, separate book in its first manuscript redaction: "Anno superiore, quum essem in Polonia, liber historiarum tuarum XXVIII. venit in manus meas." Szalay (ed.), *Verancsics Antal m. kir. helytartó, esztergomi érsek összes munkái*, vol. 1, 178.

38 According to Verancsics's introductory letter, he took Giovio's manuscript along with him to Italy and during his free hours, while staying at inns, he wrote commentary about the work

trip to Italy in 1548, though it is certain that he left Kraków in the spring of this year and returned to this city a few months later, in the late summer or early autumn.³⁹ Even if Giovio in fact received the letter, it did not prompt him to modify the text of *Historiarum sui temporis*.⁴⁰ The reason for this might be that Verancsics proposed few practical corrections (such as those pertaining to proper names) in his letter, which is composed primarily of an account of historiographical quality pertaining to the fall of Buda and which can be regarded as an independent work that rivals Giovio's history of this event.

Around half of Verancsics's letter deals with the events that took place in Buda on August 29, 1541, with special focus on the negotiations that took place at the Turkish camp outside the city. During these talks, the Turkish pashas attempted for hours on end to persuade the Hungarian lords to peacefully surrender Buda Castle. Verancsics presents these negotiations in nearly psychologizing detail, while rhetorically specifying the grounds for the Hungarian position. The parallel to the speech found in Verancsics's letter can be found in the elaboration of the Turkish position contained in Giovio's text. This elaboration represents the only rhetorical passage in the latter text. The difference is that in Giovio's work Mehmed Bey of Belgrade delivers before the Imperial Council in the early days of September an extremely anti-Hungarian speech reflecting the most radical Turkish viewpoint of that time. Verancsics's objective in describing the speech of the Hungarian lords was obviously to counterbalance the anti-Hungarian opinion reflected in Giovio's text.

The negotiations were still taking place at the sultan's camp when the Turks began the occupation of Buda. Queen Isabella helplessly awaited further developments at Buda Castle. Verancsics wrote with regard to this episode: "She [Isabella] only learned about this [the occupation] when the municipal magistrate reported to the castle that there was a Turkish guard at Szombat [Saturday] Gate and that the city guard had been chased off. It is true that by this time fear-borne rumors had spread in the city that the lords had been retained at the camp in the interest of surrendering Buda or that they had already been killed, or that they had already been sent off down the Danube toward Turkey and that the

on slips of paper that he intended to transform into a cohesive text that he would send ahead to the author from Venice: "*Igitur ingressus iter hoc, ipsum librum adjunxi mihi comitem, secumque quicquid in diversoriis per quietem, quae mihi satis exigua, nec omnino integra, quod maturabam, dabatur sim commentatus, in has cartulas studio rerum nostrarum veritatis contuli, et ad te ne omnino vacuus hospes venirem, praemittere decrevi.*" Szalay (ed.), *Verancsics Antal m. kir. helytartó, esztergomi érsek összes munkái*, vol. 1, 181.

39 Isabella established contact with Pope Paul III in a letter dated January 12, 1547. The purpose of Verancsics's trip to Italy may have been to further develop this connection. Cf. Veress, *Izabella királyné*, 270.

40 Giovio accepted only the most insignificant changes that Emperor Charles V proposed to the text, thus indicating that he was not inclined to adopt suggested modifications to his work. Cf. T. C. Price Zimmermann, "The Publication of Paolo Giovio's Histories: Charles V and the Revision of Book XXXIV", *Bibliofilia* 74 (1972) 49–90; and Richard L. Kagan, *Clio and the Crown: The Politics of History in Medieval and Early Modern Spain*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009, 85–90.

sultan would never return the boy [the queen's son] to his mother and would instead take him away along with him."⁴¹ Verancsics, as Barbaro, portrayed Queen Isabella as a grief-stricken woman and worried mother who until that time exercised no influence over the course of events, though at least is attempting to send a message to the sultan aimed at getting her son back after failing to find a pretext in order to prevent him from being taken to the Turkish camp in the first place.⁴²

The image of the queen that Antal Verancsics portrayed in his letter therefore clearly resembles those contained in Daniele Barbaro's *Tragedia* and the 40th book of Paolo Giovio's *Historiarum sui temporis*. The main difference between Verancsics's letter and Giovio's text in this regard is not in their descriptions of the situation that Isabella was facing, but in their appraisal of the queen's personal responsibility. One of the primary objectives that Verancsics wished to reach in writing his letter may have been to offer a depiction of the queen's responsibility that differed from that portrayed in Giovio's work.

VERANCSICS'S SURVIVING SOURCES; GIOVIO AND THE QUESTION OF RESPONSIBILITY

As we saw above, Antal Verancsics expressed extensive praise for Paolo Giovio's qualities as a historiographer, placing him in the same rank as Titus Livius.⁴³ However, Verancsics mentions in his introductory letter that he found a few minor errors in Giovio's work, proposing corrections that would serve to purge these

41 "*Nec prius funestum novum atque infandum tyranni facinus reginae ullique Budae cognitum, quam custodiam Turcicam in Sabbatina porta esse, urbana exacta nunciatum est in arcem a iudice civitatis (ut postea dicemus), tametsi crebro interim jactatum est in urbe metu authore proceres Budae reddendae gratia modo in castris detentos, modo simul occisos, modo Danubio missos in Turciam, caesarem demum matri non redditurum ultra filium sed una secum abducturum.*" Szalay (ed.), *Verancsics Antal m. kir. helytartó, esztergomi érsek összes munkái*, vol. 1, 199.

42 "*Verum regina percussa tam tristi nuncio et jam in verum coniecta metum, licet foemina alieno gubernata arbitrio, totque malis uno tempore esset occupata, seque in dolore et lachrymas tradidisset, habita tamen cura sui, jussit arcem diligentius custodiri, missoque ad proceres oratore, quanto celerius potuit, divinasse se et praedixisse casuum hunc significavit, caeterum, quod magnopere cuperet, si spe et consilio illis adesse posset. Verum quum et in re acta consilio opus non est, et jam ex misericordia Turcae tam sua quam illorum omnia pendeant, ea dexteritate, ea modestia atque prudentia sese gerent cum caesare, ut pro male inito consilio melius scirent; darentque per immortalē Deum omnem operam, ne si reliquam Hungariae salutem charam habeant, filius eius non periclitetur. Meminissent parentis erga se beneficiorum, foreque forte fortuna, ut eo conservato ipsi quoque periculo eximantur. Sed haec legatio aditus difficultate non est perlata ad proceres. Erat autem reginae sententia priusquam Buda exissent, ut dissimulata filii aegritudine eo tum non mitteretur ad caesarem. Proceres postquam una periclitari libuisset, adirent eum cum muneribus, ibique excusato puero, caetera quoque omnia quae e re communi fore judicassent, decernerent. Si illis commode successisset ac perspexissent non esse metuendum a caesare, de quibus in dubium venerant, se post eos filium quoque dimissurum pollicita; sin incurrissent ipsi quodpiam infortunium, incolunitati pueri in quo restaret adhuc propriae salutis aliqua species, non aegre paterentur consultum iri, quum patriae charitate et pro salute principum suscinere aliquid, semper apud mortales gloriosum esse consuevit.*" Szalay (ed.), *Verancsics Antal m. kir. helytartó, esztergomi érsek összes munkái*, vol. 1, 199–200.

43 See note 34.

small mistakes from the author's nearly perfect text. Verancsics wrote that in light of Giovio's unassailable competence as a historian, his errors "can be traced back to the ignorance of the scribes or the inaccuracy of the narratives."⁴⁴ Verancsics therefore believed that it was difficult to produce a reliable historical account based on the narratives or memoirs of others and that personal experience represented the foundation of authenticity. With this in mind, he reassured Giovio that "I promise there will be no word about other chapters, since smiths should perform the work of smiths, and I am of the opinion that it will be enough for me to present that which I experienced and with which I became acquainted."⁴⁵ One might presume that Verancsics was attempting to justify his correction of Giovio's minor errors and his proposal of an alternative narrative regarding the fall of Buda on the grounds that he, contrary to the author, was writing based on experience.

The problem with this supposition is that it is altogether incorrect. Antal Verancsics was not in fact in Buda in the years 1540–1541, but lived in Transylvania throughout this period. In 1553, Verancsics – who had by this time switched to Ferdinand's side – had been questioned as a witness in the Friar George murder inquiry. The questionnaire for witnesses in this case contained queries regarding Friar George's past and the role he had played in the fall of Buda. Verancsics, who had already entered service for the Habsburgs, declared during questioning that "I was in Transylvania when the army of His Majesty the Roman King placed the queen under siege in Buda following the death of King John." Verancsics subsequently stated that "he did not participate in these events, but just learned about them from various people."⁴⁶ With regard to his sources, Verancsics revealed only that "I learned from hearsay" and "he heard all of this and much more from Mr. Paolo Savorgnano⁴⁷ of Cividale del Friuli, the Italian secretary of Her Majesty Queen Isabella."⁴⁸ Therefore, both the long account that Antal Verancsics (who had not yet become a bishop) wrote to Bishop of Nocera Paolo Giovio, and the narrative of the fall of Buda that the latter presented in *Historiarum sui temporis*,

44 "...quae visa sunt aut amanuensium scribendi inscitiam aut referentium indiligentiam adiisse." Szalay (ed.), *Verancsics Antal m. kir. helytartó, esztergomi érsek összes munkái*, vol. 1, 179.

45 "De aliis nihil polliceor, ne fortasse, ut sutor ultra crepidam, satis me facturum existimans, si quid in his quae vidi et cognovi, praestitero." *Ibid.*

46 "Eo tempore, quo regina mortuo rege Joanne Budaie obsideretur ab exercitu majestatis regis Romanorum, ego in Transsilvania eram... dicens ipse testis se non interfuisse hisce rebus, sed a diversis personis accepisse." Georgius Pray (ed.), *Epistolae Procerum Regni Hungariae*, vol. 2. Posonii: Ex Typographico G. A. Belnay, 1806, 384, 389.

47 Paolo Savorgnano appears in no other sources, though the Savorgnani were one of the most influential families in Friuli in the sixteenth century. Cf. *I Savorgnan e la patria del Friuli dal XIII al XVIII secolo*. Udine: Assessorato alla cultura, 1984; and Edward Muir, *Mad Blood Stirring: Vendetta and Factions in Friuli during the Renaissance*. Baltimore–London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993, 77–126. The military engineer Giulio Savorgnano (1510–1595), whom Antal Verancsics met at the home of Antonio Da Mula in 1546, was the most famous member of the Savorgnano family. See Szalay (ed.), *Verancsics Antal m. kir. helytartó, esztergomi érsek összes munkái*, vol. 6, 196–198.

48 "...sed ex publica fama audivi... idem testis se inter caeteros audivisse ab domino Paulo Savorgano Forojuliensi, qui tunc temporis Serenissimae reginae Isabellae erat ab epistolis Italicis." Pray, *Epistolulae procerum*, 384, 386.

were based on verbal and written sources. Verancsics also identified the other sources in addition to Paolo Savorgnano: a conversation with Friar George in which they discussed the fall of Buda and relevant statements from Péter Petrovics.

We naturally have no access to the verbal accounts. However, we can attempt to determine the written sources that Antal Verancsics used as the basis for his own Buda narrative. We can take into consideration only texts that were written before the year 1548 and which Verancsics may have been able to obtain. These criteria narrow the field to five currently-known texts: the letters of Queen Isabella's secretary Piotr Porębski; the unique siege diary entitled *Obsidio Budae*;⁴⁹ György Szerémi's exciting historical work *De perditione regni Hungarorum*;⁵⁰ Tamás Bornemisza's Hungarian-language memoir *Emléközet* (Remembrance);⁵¹ and the Hungarian-language work *Memoria rerum*, which was previously known in scholarly literature as the *Verancsics-évkönyv* (Verancsics Yearbook).⁵² The known manuscripts of all five of these works were preserved as part of Verancsics's estate.⁵³

49 The manuscript of this work can be found at the following location: National Széchényi Library Manuscript Collection, Quart. Lat. 511; for information regarding the publication of this manuscript, see Fanni Csapó and Gábor Pesti, 'Ismeretlen forrás Buda 1541. évi ostromáról', *Fons* 25:2 (2018) 225–246.

50 Gusztáv Wenzel (ed.), *Szerémi György... emlékirata Magyarország romlásáról 1484–1543 (De perditione regni Hungarorum)* (Monumenta Hungariae Historica II; Scriptores 1). Pest: Eggenberger, 1857.

51 Tamás Bornemisza's personal account of the events that took place in Buda in the years 1540–1541, which he likely wrote at the request of Antal Verancsics, is one of the earliest examples of Hungarian-language memoir literature. Bornemisza was an active member of the group of leading citizens of Buda who in the middle of June 1541 attempted to deliver the city to the besieging German forces. This text briefly mentions the events that took place in Hungary following the death of King John, then focuses primarily on the factors that prompted the conspirators to engage in their treasonous plot, preparations to carry out the scheme and the reasons for its failure. Bornemisza contends in his memoir that stubborn pro-King John lords were responsible for the loss of Buda and that Queen Isabella would have adhered to the stipulations of the Treaty of Várad (Oradea, Romania), though these lords would not permit her to do so. According to Bornemisza, Isabella was therefore compelled to turn to the citizens of Buda in order to gain their help in reaching an agreement with General Wilhelm von Roggendorf. Bornemisza therefore claims that he and his associates had not engaged in an act of treason, because the queen had authorized them to seek accord with the Habsburg forces. Bornemisza's short account of the loss of Buda not only bears literary value as an early Hungarian-language text, but represents an outstanding source of information for this period since its author, though not impartial, not only witnessed the events in question, but participated in them as well. Tamás Bornemisza, 'Emléközet', in *Magyar emlékirók 16–18. század*, edited by István Bitskey. Budapest: Szépirodalmi Könyvkiadó, 1981, 70–77.

52 József Bessenyei (ed.), *1504–1566 Memoria rerum*. Budapest: Magyar Helikon, 1981.

53 Although the only manuscript of György Szerémi's work *De perditione regni Hungarorum* was found in Vienna, this text had likely once been part of the estate of Antal Verancsics. In any case, Verancsics must have had his own copy of *De perditione regni Hungarorum*, since Szerémi could have hardly written it without his help. The author himself wrote at the end of the work that "*Et ad Anthonium praepositum Transilvaniensem me rogaturum in scriptis obtuli ei in donum.*" See Wenzel (ed.), *Szerémi György... emlékirata*, 401.

Another important question is that if Antal Verancsics did acquire the mentioned manuscripts, might he have been familiar with them before 1548? Verancsics could have been acquainted with Piotr Porębski's letters, György Szerémi's *De perditione regni Hungarorum* and certain parts of *Memoria rerum* before this year. However, there is no trace of Tamás Bornemisza's *Emléközet* in the letter that Verancsics wrote to Paolo Giovio. Because neither Porębski's letters nor the siege diary *Obsidio Budae* refer to any events following the arrival of Queen Isabella and her entourage to Lippa (Lipova, Romania) following their departure from Buda, one may presume that they were written before the end of 1541. Szerémi completed *De perditione regni Hungarorum* after 1543, examining the fall of the cities of Esztergom and Székesfehérvár in this year. Szerémi's dedication of the book to Provost of Transylvania Antal [Verancsics] suggests that the latter received a copy of the work before the year 1548. The situation is not so clear with regard to the Hungarian-language memoirs *Emléközet* and *Memoria rerum*: we may only presume that Verancsics was familiar with these works before 1548 (or at least parts of *Memoria rerum*, which deals with events until 1566) if their textual use can be shown in the letter he wrote to Giovio.

There is no way to conduct a detailed philological analysis within the framework of the present study, thus the comparison of the possible source texts must be summarized in the following manner. There is no such information in the letter that Antal Verancsics wrote to Paolo Giovio that the former may have acquired exclusively from Tamás Bornemisza's *Emléközet*. Since the failed plot of the citizens of Buda in June 1541 represents the theme of the latter work, it does not even compose a major element in the text dealing with the loss of Buda. The fact that we have no reason to presume that there was any connection between Bornemisza, who fled to the Habsburg-controlled city of Nagyszombat (Trnava, Slovakia), and Verancsics, particularly before the latter switched his allegiance to Ferdinand in 1549, also represents an important consideration. *Obsidio Budae* is an eyewitness account and thus cannot be Verancsics's work, the cumbersome Latin composition of which implicitly suggests that the University of Padua graduate did not write it. An unnamed provost dedicated *Obsidio Budae* to Péter Petrovics and Provost of Arad Ferenc Szokoli. Since Verancsics held the office of Provost of Óbuda until 1541, he may have been the person who dedicated the work to Petrovics and Szokoli. At the same time, *Obsidio Budae* is fundamentally a history of the 1541 siege of Buda and refers only tangentially as a postscript to the events that took place at the sultan's camp and therefore could not have served as the primary source of information contained in Verancsics's letter to Giovio.

Verancsics's use of *Memoria rerum* as a source can be textually verified. Among the known sources, only this work describes the episode – which is also contained in Verancsics's account – in which Süleyman discreetly examined John Sigismund during the presentation of the infant-king to the sultan at his camp outside Buda in order to personally confirm that rumors suggesting that

Isabella had in fact given birth to a girl were untrue.⁵⁴ Neither György Szerémi nor Piotr Porębski mention this incident in their works. *Memoria rerum* is likewise the only source that attributes Süleyman's decision to occupy Buda to the fact that in his advanced age he no longer felt sufficient strength to conduct annual military campaigns to Hungary.⁵⁵ Thus if Verancsics did not base his letter to Giovio on information that he had acquired verbally, his mention of the above occurrences appears to support the hypothesis that by 1548 he had already read at least part of *Memoria rerum*.

Piotr Porębski's letters unequivocally represented the main source of Antal Verancsics's information regarding the events that took place in Buda in the years 1540–1541. Two of Porębski's letters have survived as part of Verancsics's estate.⁵⁶ Both letters were written by the same hand, while Verancsics himself wrote a few notes in the first letter, thus proving that he had had it in his possession. In my opinion, both of these valuable source documents were at one time appended to a single letter that was impeccable in terms of form as well and which has since been lost. The two letters that Verancsics used as sources were likely written at different times and can be regarded as fundamentally independent from one another. Of the two letters, that entitled "*De obsidione*" was presumably written first. Porębski's first letter consists of an account of the fall of Buda from the beginning of the siege on May 4, 1541 until the arrival of Turkish troops on July 10. His second letter, which he wrote in early September – thus after he had left Buda – represents a thematic continuation of the first letter and contains supplementary information as well. In the introduction to the second letter, Porębski expresses regret that he had been unable to send it to its addressee (Verancsics?) for such a long time. If Porębski had managed to forward his first letter in early July, then two months passed before he was able to send the second – a length of time that would have justified such an apology. In this letter, the author briefly reviews previous events before resuming his narrative with the arrival of the Turkish relief force to Buda. This narrative, which ends with the flight of Queen Isabella from Buda, demonstrably served as the main source for the information and chronology of events contained in Verancsics's letter to Paolo Giovio. The notes that Verancsics wrote on the manuscript of the Porębski letter prove that the currently-known manuscript was once in the hands of the former.⁵⁷

Antal Verancsics may have become acquainted with Piotr Porębski's text in several ways, since we have information showing that his account was widely known during the period in question. A German-language publication entitled *Vier warhafftige Missive* that may have appeared in late 1541, though of which we

54 Bessenyei (ed.), *1504–1566 Memoria rerum*, 65.

55 Bessenyei (ed.), *1504–1566 Memoria rerum*, 71.

56 Szalay (ed.), *Verancsics Antal m. kir. helytartó, esztergomi érsek összes munkái*, vol. 1, 162–178.

57 This manuscript can be found at the following location: National Széchényi Library Manuscript Collection, Fol. Lat. 422/II f. 46r–51v.

are aware of several reprints from the year 1542,⁵⁸ contained – as the work’s title suggests – the German-language translations of the following four letters that had originally been written in Latin: a letter that Queen Isabella wrote to Seweryn Boner sometime before October 18, 1541;⁵⁹ Porębski’s account with no addressee identified; excerpts from two letters written to Ferenc Révay (to which we shall return later); and Süleyman’s letter to the Transylvanian nobility in which the sultan urges them to remain loyal to John Sigismund. In light of the fact that all four letters are connected in some way to Isabella, the lords who were associated with her or the fate of Buda, we cannot exclude the possibility that somebody from the queen’s entourage sent them to an unknown printing house in Germany as a means of informing German public opinion. The letter that Verancsics wrote to Paolo Giovio suggests that, among the four letters published in *Vier warhafftige Missive*, the former may have been familiar with that which the provisor of Esztergom, Mihály Muthnokoy, sent to Ferenc Révay.

There are essentially two components of Antal Verancsics’s letter to Paolo Giovio that are clearly the product of the author’s own work and were thus not derived from his sources: the lengthy, previously mentioned plea of the Hungarian lords in which they attempt to persuade the Ottomans not to occupy Buda; and the text inserted at the end of the letter offering a detailed description of István Werbőczy’s fate, particularly his ghastly death.⁶⁰ The latter text, which is imbued with the quality of a novella, is particularly interesting because it could hardly have been written based on the previously mentioned sources. In *Memoria rerum*, the poisoning of Werbőczy is reported as a fact,⁶¹ though does not provide detail regarding the reason for which he was murdered. In *De perditione regni Hungarorum*, György Szerémi does not assert that the Pasha of Buda had poisoned Werbőczy, writing only that the old Hungarian chancellor fell asleep in the arms of the Lord three days after having taken his lunch as a guest of the high-ranking Turkish official.⁶² In other instances, Szerémi falsely suspected that conspiracy and murder had taken place, therefore it is odd that

58 The Bayerische Saatsbibliothek catalogue lists three editions – one without a place of publication, one published in Ulm and one published in Augsburg. The edition published in Ulm can be found at the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek (297301–B ALT RARA) without a date. The edition published in Augsburg can be found at the National Széchényi Library (App. H. 290) with the date *Anno MDXLII*. The somewhat dissimilar layout of the title pages also show that these are separate editions with the same content.

59 In this letter Isabella referred in the future tense to a partial diet to be convened in Debrecen on October 18, 1541, thus revealing that she wrote it before this date.

60 István Werbőczy (?–1541): the most prominent Hungarian jurist of his era, whose 1514 book *Tripartitum opus iuris consuetudinarii incltyi regni Hungariae* was the first law code published in Hungary. Werbőczy became the Palatine of Hungary in 1525 and served as chancellor and counselor for King John I beginning in 1526, remaining loyal to Queen Isabella even after the king’s death. Following the Turkish occupation of Buda, the sultan appointed Werbőczy to serve as the magistrate for Christians who had remained in the city.

61 Bessenyei (ed.), *1504–1566 Memoria rerum*, 89.

62 “*Et tertia die obdormivit in Domine sine confessione.*” Wenzel (ed.), *Szerémi György... emlékirata*, 343.

he did not voice such suspicion with regard to Werbőczy's death. Szerémi did mention Werbőczy's scribe named Márkó, though claimed that the Turks did not murder the copyist, but mockingly threw him into a sewer following his master's death. Only Mihály Muthnoky claims in the letter to Ferenc Révay published in *Vier warhafftige Missiven* that the Turks murdered Werbőczy's servant: "Yesterday my servant saw with his own eyes that the chancellor went to visit the pasha and that when he arrived to the gate the Turks slapped one of his servants in the face behind him. The servant cried out to his master to rescue him. However the chancellor responded: what can I do about it, my dear friend, since you also clearly see that I must also fear them. While the chancellor was with the pasha, the Turks beat his servant to death near the chancellor's carriage and left him there lying dead. His master must have seen this, but he could there say not a word against it."⁶³

If we compare our sources, the Werbőczy novella that Antal Verancsics included in his letter to Paolo Giovio can be put together from the information contained in *Memoria rerum*, György Szerémi's *De perditione regni Hungarorum* and Mihály Muthnoky's letter to Ferenc Révay. According to Verancsics's literary version of events pertaining to Werbőczy and his death, the chancellor's servant languished in Turkish captivity, learning to speak the Turkish language during this time, before the chancellor gained his release and retained him as a sort of counselor. The Turks therefore murder the servant-cum-counselor, then the pasha has Werbőczy poisoned so that he cannot report his arbitrary action to officials in Constantinople.

If the above story is Antal Verancsics's creation, then it conforms nicely to the concept that manifests itself in his letter to Paolo Giovio: that István Werbőczy and his associates were responsible for the fall of Buda rather than Friar George and Péter Petrovics. The main question posed in Verancsics's protracted correction attempts to determine responsibility for this tragedy. In terms of the loss of Buda, the fact that Ottoman troops slipped into the city as the infant-king and the leaders of Hungary were at the sultan's camp was of decisive importance. The defenders of Buda, exhausted following the German siege of the city that had begun several months previously, would have hardly been able to resist the sultan's attack. Moreover, it was no longer possible to defend Buda Castle, since the heir to the Hungarian throne and all of the most

63 "So hat mein Diener gester mit seinen augen das gesehen, das der Canzler zum Bassa gangen, und wey er unter die thür kommen ist, haben die Türcken hinder im seiner knecht einen in das angesicht geschlagen. Der knecht aber schreyet seinen herrn an, er soll in retten, aber der Canzler anwortet ihm, was soll ich dazu thun, lieber bruder, sihest du doch woll, das ichs auch vonnn ihnen gewartenn muss. Weil nur der Canzler bey dem Bassa ist, schlagenn im die Türcken sein knecht gar zu todt hart bey des Canzlers wagen und lassen in also todt bey dem wagen ligenn. Das musste sein herr sehen unnd dorfft kein wort darwider sagen." *Vier warhafftige Missive*, fol. CIIV. For the context surrounding Muthnoky's letter, see Zoltán Péter Bagó, "...Szolgám, akit kegyelmes uram parancsára a pasához küldtem...": Két jelentés a Buda elestét követő időszak sorsdöntő eseményeiről, különös tekintettel Török Bálint és Werbőczy István sorsára, *Hadtörténelmi Közlemények* 117:2 (2004) 739–750.

powerful lords were at the Turkish camp and thus Süleyman's hostages as Turkish military forces occupied Buda. If we take this factor into account, responsibility for the loss of Buda rests on the shoulders of those who urged Queen Isabella to comply with the sultan's request that she send her son to his camp along with the leading lords. Paolo Giovio identifies in his Buda book the influential lords who accompanied John Sigismund to the sultan's camp: Friar George, Péter Petrovics, István Werbőczy and castellan Orbán Batthyány. However, Giovio unambiguously attributes the decision to submit to the sultan to Friar George.

Although Isabella, listening to her motherly instincts, fears for her child's safety and does not want to permit him to be taken from her, "*sed monente demum obstanteque Georgio*," that is, Friar George urges the queen to send the boy to Süleyman's camp in the company of the lords in order to avoid arousing the sultan's suspicion. In Paolo Giovio's work, Friar George is the only person in Isabella's entourage who argues in favor of submission to Süleyman and therefore was ultimately responsible for the fact that the Hungarians fell into a trap and Buda fell into Turkish hands. In Verancsics's letter to Giovio, the same five people play the main role, though the difference is palpable. Verancsics's letter contained the following description of Friar George's behavior: "With regard to the question of whether they should expose the royal scion to the great peril and whether the lords should go to the camp of the fearsome Turkish sultan, leaving Buda without military leadership and entrusting the city to commoners, he was rather taciturn and, as a result of the dubiousness of the decision, uncertain and leaned more toward that which others decided, though attempted through procrastination to defer the decision because he saw that an obvious danger was threatening them."⁶⁴ But not only was he cautious. Let us again quote Antal Verancsics: "Meanwhile Utissenius (i.e., Friar Georg) behaved this way and did not decide haphazardly, just as the *ispán* [count] of Temes Péter Petrovics did not dare to decide either."⁶⁵

There are thus two members of Isabella's court who at the very least urge caution regarding the decision of whether to submit to the sultan. Finally (according to Verancsics) another decision is made for the following reason: "István Werbőczy, the supreme leader of the royal chancellery, and Bálint Török, not to mention Orbán Batthyány and one of the commanders who has distinguished himself in military affairs, the Serb Péter Ucsarevics,⁶⁶ who

64 "*Quapropter in exponenda regia prole tanto discrimini, deque omnium procerum ad castra metuendi Turcae protectione dimissa Buda plebeo populo et sine duce militi, magis tacitus et ambiguitate consilii anxius, paratiorque ad ea, quae alii decrevisent, differebat mora deliberationem, quum... manifestum imminere videbat periculum.*" Szalay (ed.), *Verancsics Antal m. kir. helytartó, esztergomi érsek összes munkái*, vol. 1, 184.

65 "*Utissenio itaque sic se gerente, nec decernante temere Petro etiam Petrovio comite Temesiensi nihil ad rem deliberati afferre audente.*" *Ibid.*

66 According to a note that Verancsics later expunged and therefore did not appear in the Szalay edition, Ucsarevics (Owchiarevius) was the captain of the Danube war barges. National Széchényi Library Manuscript Collection, Fol. Lat. 422/III. f. 102r-v.

attempted to employ the widest variety of forceful means of persuasion, resolutely cited numerous arguments in opposition to the doubts of the others and finally overcame their indecision and brought them to their side. They too should have faith in Süleyman, they can go to him [his camp] without misgivings, there is no reason to fear that the child will be held there, they do not have to worry about the future of the country.”⁶⁷

Verancsics provided an unambiguous answer in the letter to the question of who made the recommendation upon which the final decision was made to go to the sultan’s camp, thereby undertaking the risk leaving Buda defenseless: the opinion of three out of the five key figures – István Werbőczy, Bálint Török and Orbán Batthyány – prevailed over the caution of Friar George and Péter Petrovics. If anybody was responsible for the fall of Buda, then it was these three people, particularly Werbőczy and Török. The fact that both Werbőczy and Török soon paid a horrible price for placing trust in the pagan Turks serves, as it were, to confirm their guilt: the former died a horrible death from the pasha’s poison, while Török spent the remainder of his life in captivity. Verancsics’s Werbőczy novella in this way becomes a genuine parable in which the well-intentioned, though foolish chancellor is punished for his deeds.

In addition, the grand speech that Antal Verancsics puts into the mouths of the lords serves to their benefit. Based on these factors, the reader legitimately feels that the lords who fell into the sultan’s trap had done everything they could to prevent the Turks from occupying Buda. Verancsics does not name those who participated in the speech, thus the glory falls upon all of them, though particularly on Friar George and Péter Petrovics, who moreover could not be blamed for having tried to persuade Isabella to comply with the sultan’s request. According to this reading of Verancsics’s letter, the lords are the truly active main characters, while the queen receives only a walk-on role as the mother worrying about her son who attempts to intervene on behalf of the lords, then leaves Buda: she is a prisoner of destiny.

At the same time, no matter how much Antal Verancsics suggests in the letter he wrote to Paolo Giovio that the lords who by 1548 were either dead or languishing in captivity had been primarily responsible for placing too much faith in the motives that had induced the sultan to send his invitation, Verancsics also indicates that the fateful unfolding of events had placed the lords on a pathway of constraint regardless of the considerations that had served as the basis for their decisions: “Whether all this happened by mistake or intentionally, none of them can be made solely responsible for it. Their integrity, which until then had been intact and unimpaired, and partially their fright, partially the

67 “*Soli Stephanus Verbucius summus epistularum scriniique regii magister et Valentinus cognomento Turcus, ut Urbanum Bathianum et Petrum Ouchiareum Rascianum, unum ex ducibus militum, insignem virum in re bellica praeteream, qui magnam vim huic persuasioni stimulis suis attulerunt, obfirmatis animis contra omnium dubitationem usi argumentis plurimis et cunctationem eis exemerunt et in suam petraxere sententiam. Credendum scilicet esse Solimano et ad eum secure eundum, nec de pueri abductione aut de statu regni metuendum.*” Szalay (ed.), *Verancsics Antal m. kir. helytartó, esztergomi érsek összes munkái*, vol. 1, 184–185.

inadequacy of their strength insofar as they would have attempted to resist, as well as their hopelessness all played a role.”⁶⁸ This is perhaps the most important sentence in Verancsics’s letter because it signals that he was perfectly aware of the complexity of the truth and the necessary simplification stemming from the literary toolkit of historiography as he attempted to maintain a balance between the interests of those on behalf of whom he was acting and the truth.

However, Antal Verancsics’s viewpoints regarding those who were responsible for the fall of Buda and his opinion of Queen Isabella herself had changed drastically by the time of his testimony as part of the Friar George murder trial in 1553. As a subject of King Ferdinand, Verancsics appeared to forget that he had once written an *apologia* in defense of the role that Friar George had played in the Turkish occupation of Buda. Not only did Verancsics acknowledge in his testimony that he had not witnessed the events that took place in Buda in 1541, but he also highlighted different aspects of the narrative regarding the fall of the city based on information collected from others. In his 1553 testimony, Verancsics portrayed Isabella as a Christian sovereign with the capacity for independent action who “would have more readily chosen more modest circumstances among Christians than more magnificent ones among the Turks” and therefore “made up her mind to hand Buda Castle over to His Holy Majesty the Roman King.”⁶⁹ According to Verancsics, Isabella thus devised a plan in cooperation with envoys from Poland to allow German troops to occupy Buda. This reflects the version of events contained in the memoir of Tamás Bornemisza, who asserted that the conspirators had acted with the knowledge and approval of Queen Isabella. Verancsics went even farther than this in his testimony, leaving out the citizens as well and depicting the surreptitious nighttime opening of the gates before General von Roggendorf’s troops as the plan of the queen alone. Verancsics furthermore asserted that this plan had stunned Friar George, who not only tried to prevent it from being carried out, but “rebuked the queen in plain language and dealt with her more severely than the dignity of her position would have demanded.”⁷⁰ However, Friar George and the other lords were guilty not only of this. Verancsics claimed that they had been the ones who had invited the sultan to enter Buda explicitly against the will of Isabella: “Friar George, Petrovics, István Werbőczy and some others, as they had discussed, attempted to persuade the queen to accept the decidedly sanguine plan to request the sultan’s assistance. The queen, who, as they said, abhorred the sultan, vehemently opposed this plan, though the reasoning of the counselors eventually triumphed and she consented

68 “*Nemini horum virorum uni impingendus est, hic sive sit error, sive consilium, sed omnium partim fiducia, quam hactenus salvam habuerant et inviolatam, partim timori et virium resistendi posse, si resistisse tentavissent, imbecillitati atque diffidentiae.*” Szalay (ed.), *Verancsics Antal m. kir. helytartó, esztergomi érsek összes munkái*, vol. 1, 193.

69 “*...ipsa regina mallet mediocrem etiam fortunam cum Christianis tolerare, quam magnam cum Turcis, demum aliis etiam rationibus persuasa induxerat animum ad deditionem faciendam arcis Budensis Romanorum regis majestati.*” Pray, *Epistolae Procerum*, vol. 2, 384–385.

70 “*...increpita regina verbis etiam minus decentibus, habita etiam ipsa regina strictius, quam eius dignitas exigebat.*” Pray, *Epistolae Procerum*, vol. 2, 386.

to call upon the Turks for help.”⁷¹ Finally, they used effective arguments to convince Isabella to send her child to see the sultan at his camp: “The queen subsequently summoned her advisors and had her son brought to her as well. The queen, who worried about the fate of her son, resisted for a long time, but finally the above individuals persuaded her and she thus sent both her son and her counselors [to the Turkish camp].”⁷²

It is a cliché that the appraisal of historical events depends to a great degree on the point of view of the observer. In the spring of 1548, when Friar George and Péter Petrovics were at the height of their power in Transylvania, it appeared to be expedient to absolve them of their heavy responsibility for the loss of Buda, especially in light of the fact that negotiations had already begun between the royal courts in Vienna and Gyulafehérvár (Alba Iulia, Romania) regarding the transfer of the eastern part of Hungary to Ferdinand and Isabella’s second forced departure. The concept that guided Antal Verancsics’s hand when he wrote his letter to Paolo Giovio reflected this. Archival research is destined to determine if there was actually some connection between the trip that Verancsics made to Italy, the letter he wrote to Giovio and Daniele Barbaro’s drama. As we have seen, agreement in terms of time and location as well as the corresponding point of view seen from Isabella’s perspective makes this probable. However, a couple of years later, as a subject of King Ferdinand, who had approved the murder of Friar George, and within the framework of a Holy See-conducted inquiry, Verancsics had to confirm that Friar George could not in the least said to be free of blame and wrongdoing, since the loss of Buda was his fault as well. Moreover, it may have been expedient for Verancsics to place the half-Italian Isabella in a positive light before the Italian priests who were questioning him as part of the investigation of Friar George’s murder. In this way, the walk-on performer became a resolute Christian woman who was not so much the victim of fate, but rather of her depraved, or at least gullible, subjects.

CONCLUSION

If we seek the answers to the questions posed implicitly at the beginning of this study, that is, if we evaluate the role that Isabella played in the loss of Buda, we must arrive to the same conclusion that Antal Verancsics reached in his letter to Paolo Giovio: that neither the queen nor the Hungarian magnates were in control of the situation at this time. Following the arrival of the sultan to Buda, they may have at most harbored the illusion that the Turks would not take advantage of the opportunity that had presented itself to occupy the capital city

71 “...consilio, quantum dicebatur, urgentissimo Fratris Georgii, Petrovics, Stephani Verböczii et quorundam aliorum ex consilio persuasum est reginae, ut imploraretur Turcae auxilium. Regina, ut quae dudum aversa erat, quantum dicebatur, a Turca, plurimum adversabatur huic consilio, evicta tamen consulentium rationibus acquievit, ut Turca advocaretur.” Pray, *Epistulae procerum*, 386–387.

72 “Tandem vocatis ad se reginae consiliariis Fratrem Georgio, Petrovics et aliis, filium et reginam ad se adduci fecit, dubia regina de salute filii diu restitit, persuasa tandem a praedictis personis et filii demisit et consiliarios.” Pray, *Epistulae Procerum*, vol. 2, 387.

of the Kingdom of Hungary. In light of the manner in which the General von Roggendorf-led siege transpired, it is also questionable whether the German imperial army would have been capable of defending Buda from Süleyman if Queen Isabella and her child's guardians (Friar George, Péter Petrovics and Bálint Török) had come to an agreement with the Viennese court earlier and ceded the city to Ferdinand before the sultan's arrival. There certainly was not much chance of this happening. On August 29, 1541, Queen Isabella and her leading political officials could choose only between the alternatives of maintaining the charade with the sultan until the very end or yielding the city of Buda to him without resistance.

Isabella's later activity as a sovereign – since her origin and the example of her mother predestined her to this – clearly shows that she regarded herself as more than a mere puppet and that she maintained within her the will to rule: as Paolo Giovio wrote, Sforza blood coursed through her veins. However, in 1541 and 1551 this will was forced to submit to historical events. Whether we attribute the unfolding of history to chance, the geopolitical situation or some sort of necessity composed of individual destinies – this is a dilemma of historiography that during the period in question manifested itself with exceptional strength in historical thinking and stood primarily under the influence of literary-type notions of fate. According to Giovio's motto, fate has a more distant horizon than human wisdom – *Fato prudentia minor*. According to Isabella's motto, the individual must bow before the will of fate: if one receives a role on the stage of history, it is appropriate to play this role to the very end in accordance with one's abilities and opportunities. As the great director requires: *Sicut fata volunt*.



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